



Introduction: This Handbook



ADDRESSING PUBLIC TRUST AND CONFIDENCE IN A SYSTEMATIC WAY

In response to issues of public trust and confidence, many judges and court staff have undertaken individual efforts to reach out to their communities by devising and conducting a variety of programs. Too often, however, an excellent community outreach project is developed by an individual judge and then lost when the judge moves on. Too often, one court puts many hours into developing a successful program that could be duplicated statewide, but no one outside the local court is aware of this resource. Too often the community wants to play a role in the courts but can find no outlet for fulfilling this desire to help. Finally, too often members of the public hold great respect for the courts but feel that the courts have stopped speaking to them because the language and rules of the court are unintelligible to them, the courthouse is intimidating and confusing, and the judges and court staff seem distant from the community they serve.

To address issues of public trust and confidence in a systemic way, the Judicial Council has undertaken a long-range project called *Court Planning and Community Outreach in California*. As one element of this project the council, with the financial assistance of the State Justice Institute, sponsored the Statewide Community-Focused Court Planning Conference in May 1998. This conference, along with the work of the Special Task Force on Court/Community Outreach, seeks to institutionalize a community-focused orientation through locally developed collaboration activities in the courts. This handbook is the next primary resource in this broad community-focused courts project.

Purpose and contents. This handbook is intended to introduce the many concepts associated with court and community collaboration (e.g., court community outreach, community-focused courts, community courts, restorative justice, etc.) and the steps necessary to ensure a general community orientation of the courts. The programs described in this handbook can be used by all courts — trial and appellate, state and federal — to varying degrees depending on the nature of the program and the prerogatives of the courts. None of the program descriptions are intended to limit the nature, type, or number of community outreach programs in which courts can be involved.

This handbook is a synthesis of the success stories witnessed and learned about by the Special Task Force on Court/Community Outreach during its survey of courts in California and across the nation. It is a primer intended to provoke thought that leads to



action. Ideas are here. Examples are here. Tools and samples are here. The Judicial Council of California and the Special Task Force on Court/Community Outreach invite you to use this handbook to inspire programs, collaboration, and/or processes that will develop your court's community focus.

Each section of this handbook is designed to offer ideas and resources to help your courts respond to the needs of your community. The material is presented in sections as follows:

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| Section 1 | COURT AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION – OVERVIEW AND GUIDELINES This section offers an overview of court and community collaboration and general guidelines to consider when planning court community outreach programs. |
| Section 2 | DIALOGUE – COMMUNICATING WITH THE COMMUNITY This section provides profiles and examples of methods for improving the dialogue between courts and their communities. Included topics are customer service development, media relationships, citizen advisory committees, partnerships for providing civics education, and more. |
| Section 3 | BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARTNERS AND VOLUNTEERS This section examines resources for potential partners and volunteers and for developing court volunteer programs. Sample volunteer program tools are provided. A resource list included in this section identifies the many organizations and individuals the task force encountered who expressed an interest in partnering with their local courts. |
| Section 4 | COMMUNITY JUSTICE – ADDRESSING COMMUNITY PROBLEMS THROUGH JUSTICE INITIATIVES This section provides an overview of the national movement toward community problem solving through justice initiatives. Definitions and examples, as well as resources for learning more, are provided. The descriptions of community justice programs are presented in two parts: community <i>criminal</i> justice and community <i>civil</i> justice. |
| Section 5 | COURTS AS EDUCATORS – MODEL PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS This section provides five general models of court and community public education programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. WORKING WITH YOUTH AND SCHOOLSB. JUROR EDUCATION/APPRECIATIONC. SPEAKERS BUREAUSD. COURTHOUSE TOURSE. PUBLIC INFORMATION MATERIALS |



For each model, a general program description, including *objective*, *potential audience*, *format*, *content*, “*getting the word out*,” and *evaluation*, is provided. Key points for organizing each program are described and then followed by a narrative *What Works* section that provides examples and tips from successful programs in California and nationwide. Finally, for each model, a *Samples & Tools* section contains letters, brochures, posters, surveys, and press releases that may be useful in developing the program.

Section 6

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS – INVOLVEMENT OF THE JUDICIARY IN COURT AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION PROGRAMS

This section contains a comprehensive analysis of ethical considerations related to judicial involvement in community collaboration activities and general guidelines for judicial officer involvement.

Section 7

CONTINUING INNOVATION – ADDRESSING LOCAL NEEDS IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

This section encourages the courts to continue to innovate in response to community needs and concerns. It provides some background information about the nature of innovation; suggested activities to spur creative thinking among judges, court staff, and the community; and examples of innovation that bridge court practice with community needs.

Appendix

Provided in the appendix are:

- **Program Listing.** This section provides a complete contact list for all court and community collaboration programs referenced in the handbook.
- **Resource Contacts.** This section contains contact information for the many organizations highlighted in the handbook that have resources to offer courts.
- **Bibliography.** Want to learn more? This section provides additional resources with more detailed information about many of the topics presented in the handbook.

Index

A brief index is provided to assist users in locating information on specific topics and programs of interest to them.

Tools diskette. At the front of this handbook is a diskette containing all of the “tools” offered in this handbook. These standard word processing documents can be used by the courts to make the startup or enhancement of court community outreach projects a simpler task. Included are letters, pamphlets, flyers, and press releases formatted for the easy addition of court-specific information. Once court names, contact numbers, and so on, have been inserted, these documents are ready for printing, photocopying, and release.



Opportunities for Courts and Communities video. The enclosed video was filmed during the court community outreach panel discussion at the May 1998 Statewide Community-Focused Court Planning Conference. The court leaders on this distinguished panel included Hon. Veronica Simmons McBeth (Los Angeles Municipal Court), Hon. Darrell W. Stevens (Superior Court of California, County of Butte), Mr. Alexander Aikman (Superior Court of California, County of El Dorado), and Mr. Eric Lee (Center for Court Innovation, New York City, New York). Panel members discuss their successful court community outreach programs and the role court and community leaders can play in developing and continuing court community outreach programs. This 75-minute video is an excellent overview of the wide range of projects available that benefit both the court and the community and may be used as a tool in presentations to seek involvement of court and community leaders in local activities.

Community outreach clearinghouse. Court and community collaboration is a constantly evolving arena. Each court's community outreach activities can provide leadership for others. The Judicial Council is committed to assisting all courts in sharing information about programs and activities that improve public trust and confidence in the courts and that engage in community dialogue and outreach. This handbook has been designed to accommodate additions and changes in the future. For Judicial Council staff to perform the clearinghouse function, information about local court activities is essential. The AOC asks to be kept informed about your local court and community collaboration experiences. Please share your knowledge with Jack Urquhart, Administrative Office of the Courts, at 415-865-7654; jack.urquhart@jud.ca.gov, so this handbook can be updated, revised, and shared.

